Improved Body Design Keynote of 1917 Cars

Coming Season's Productions Expected to Be 2,000,000 Cars—Makers Are Centering Every Effort on Improvement of Appearance of Car—1917 Bodies Strikingly Better Than 1916 Models—Cars Lower in Appearance and Roomier

(By H. A. TARANTOUS)

Two million passengers cars, decidedly better in appearance, with some mechanical refinements, and, contrary to the general impression, lower in average price per car, are to be manufactured by the automobile industry during the 1917 season. The man in the street, who has been talking motors ever since the great war began, shrugs his shoulders when the motor industry is mentioned and mutters something that seems to indicate his belief that said industry should be put in a straight-jacket for its own good and that of the public.

He says, this man of the cement sidewalks, that two million cars are too many; that we are near the saturation point and that "they'd better look out what they're doin'." He is always a bit vague, our man in the street, but he says that prices certainly are going to be higher because the announcements say that they are, but he agrees rather grudgingly that the cars certainly look better than ever; that they are roomier, better equipped and offered in a bewildering array of attractive body designs.

But the man in the street is altogether wrong in his strictures on production and confused as to prices. He fails to consider that the larger producers have in most instances decreased prices on cars so that the average price per car now is lower, although the average list price is higher. The average list price is the average of the list prices, while the average car price is obtained by dividing the total production into the total value of the production.

Production in 1917 will reach 2,000,000 cars unless the leaders in the motor industry are all wrong in their anticipations. I have before me reports from practically all the large manufacturers and from most of the small ones and they inevitably indicate a total production of more than 2,000,000. Ford figures have not yet been given out, but we certainly are justified in expecting more than 500,000 cars and those who should be in a position to know insist that the Ford organization will put out 750,000 cars during the 1917 season. Then we may count on Overland for approximately 300,000, Chevrolet for 194,000, Studebaker for 100,000, Buick for 150,000, Maxwell for more than 100,000, Dodge for something in excess of 80,000, Paige for 20,000, Saxon for more than 50,000, Hudson for over 30,000, Jeffery for 12,000, Packard for 12,000, Oldsmobile for over 25,000, Mitchell for 20,000, Haynes for 16,000, Hupmobile for 18,000, Franklin for 10,000 and Chandler for 20,000.

Considered analytically, this production is not abnormal. Remember that the average rate of increase in production since the industry began is 40 per cent per year. In the light of past experience then, the increase from close to 1,500,000 in 1916 to the 1917 estimated figure, does not seem unnatural. In 1914 American makers produced 573,114 cars and in 1915 the number was increased 892,618. Materials cost more today than ever before, the labor situation is not wholly satisfactory and machinery is not so easily obtained as it was before the war. Yet, in spite of all these adverse conditions, American motor car manufacturers are going to increase their production by bettering their manufacturing methods, by simplifying the chassis through the elimination of certain parts and by making few design changes of a costly nature.

Production has a direct bearing on price and since production will increase, we naturally assume that prices will go down. This is exactly true. The price of the average finished automobile will be lower this season than in 1916, but the average list price will be higher, this latter being due to the fact that so many makers of medium and high price cars have increased their prices. The large producers have dropped prices and the outputs of these are so overwhelmingly large that the average price per car comes down. Those makers who have had to increase prices really were conservative.

Prices of all materials and labor have soared and in most instances the increase in price is just enough to compensate for the added cost imposed on the manufacturer. Steel, aluminum, copper, rubber, brass, lead, all have risen and while a few of these show signs of dropping, it does not appear as though the decline will be appreciable so long as the war continues. In addition to these troubles manufacturers have in mind that perennial source of worry—the labor question. Workmen now are making more money than ever before in history. If conditions later compel a lowering of this record wage rate, the result will be dissatisfaction among the workers. After the war is over when bonuses and other inducements cease, many of the present employes will have to drift into other lines and there may be strikes and other labor troubles. This very easily may curtail production and have a marked effect on prices.

Practically every maker, however, has seen the necessity of giving his product the appearance of being something new and to attain this end bodies have received a great deal of attention. Appearance is the one big thing which has received 90 per cent of the makers' attention. As a general thing the 1917 bodies are strikingly better than those of 1916. They are lower in appearance, roomier both in front and rear, better equipped and on the whole designed to be esthetically pleasing. Makers are beginning to realize that a cheap body is a liability because it is one of the first things an owner discovers. Building a substantial chassis at a low price is not difficult nowadays and to take a good chassis and mount a cheap body is clearly wrong. Many of those who have done this are changing.

The new manufacturers coming into the field have seen the error of some, with the result that the new cars built on standard chassis show excellent body work. There are three good examples of the latter class of car, of medium price, having bodies of the newest design made of good materials and fitted with instruments and hardware that will not rust in a few weeks. The three cars in question are the Jordan, Bour-Davis and Liberty.

MOTOR HONKS

By Otto Horne

When using polish around the brass handles, hinges, etc., of the car try to keep any from getting on the paint, as it will dull the finish. It is well to hold a piece of cardboard in such a way as to protect the paint.

Contractor Laws has just returned from Maui, having completed his work on that island. His friends are glad to see him back in Honolulu. Mr. Laws is an enthusiastic motorist, being the proud owner of the White Racer with such graceful lines and speed we see in Honolulu.

An electric motor, whose brushes were well worn, gave out sparks that ignited gasoline on the floor of a Milville, N. J., garage and severely burned a mechanic, while the motor, valued at $125 was ruined by the flames. A few "safety first" methods may save you a like experience.

If it is found necessary to prime the cylinders through the relief valves in order to start the engine, use as little as possible, as it cuts the oil around the piston and makes it difficult to crank the motor. We have seen cases where it was almost impossible to crank the motor, due to excessive priming with gasoline.

It is interesting to note that without rubber there could be no submarines. According to a Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company expert, battery cells, separators, insulators, gaskets on doors, hatch covers, manhole covers, torpedo tube covers and valves for water tightness, are among the items of equipment in which rubber plays an important part.

It is bad practise to leave the gasoline turned on when leaving the car overnight or for any length of time. All that keeps 15 to 20 gallons of gasoline from running out is a small valve, which may leak, operated by a float, which can take up gasoline and get heavy. A gasoline leak, especially in a small garage, may cause a dangerous explosion or a disastrous fire. So avoid trouble by shutting off the gasoline when leaving the car.

In case a ball breaks in one of the bearings it should be replaced by one of the same size. If the car has been run several thousand miles the balls will have been worn much smaller and a new ball should not be put in with them. If one of the same size cannot be obtained use one a few thousandths of an inch smaller. A ball that is too large will carry the weight too long as it revolves. A smaller ball allows the weight to be borne by the two balls next to it.

We note the Auto Service & Supply Company is making a great many changes in its salesrooms at Alakea and Merchant streets. Harry Parker states they will soon have as fine and up-to-date service station for tires and accessories as any Goodyear branch. This company established the home of Goodyear tires a little over a year ago and with the steady watch on their repair plant and service department have worked up a trade which has demanded larger quarters and a larger stock of Goodyear tires.

Do not neglect the grease cups and oil holes underneath the car. They should be attended to every day, the same as all others. Take an extension light or flashlight under the car with you and take the time to locate all of them. Pay particular attention to the universal joint. If it is covered by a leather boot remove the boot occasionally and refill it after cleaning it. The writer has seen a boot run several hundred miles without attention, in which all trace of grease had disappeared and its place taken by mud from the road.

MOVIE ACTOR PICKS CAR FOR HIS PERSONAL USE

Arthur H. Ashley, who is causing as many heart flutters among the feminine movie fans as there are flickers in the latest world film, "The Summer Girl," in which he is starring, has added a Paige roadster to his fleet of motor cars.

While the recent ascent of Mount Hood, Oregon, by a Paige Fairfield "6-46" convinced him of the stamina and staunchness of the Paige, Ashley has no intention of using his new purchase for plunging over the Palisades, rolling off a jackknife bridge or for any other movie stunt. The new Paige is just for his personal enjoyment.

An endowment fund of $15,000 for the upkeep of Grover Cleveland's birthplace in Caldwell, N. J., will be raised by the Cleveland Birthplace Memorial Association.